

Helpful Hints for Hiking and Backpacking

Compliments of El Paso

Combined Search and Rescue Team

The Franklins and Surrounding Desert

The Franklins are a beautiful place to spend the day hiking, but keeping the following in mind will help to make your hike more enjoyable. Much of the rock in the Franklins is very loose. Be extra cautious of your footing in these areas. And don't forget that even though you can usually see the city from most of the trails, you are still in a wilderness setting. Don't be deceived.

Also keep in mind the danger of dehydration during the hot summer months. Try hiking either early in the day or late in the afternoon during extremely hot weather.

You should also expect very cool evening and nighttime temperatures during the winter, spring, and fall months. Make sure you are prepared.

Always keep an eye out for snakes. Look where you place your hands and feet. And remember, a tangle with some kinds of desert plants can ruin your outing.

Always Plan Out Your Hike Prior To Starting The Day

Never leave for a hike without informing a responsible person about where you will be hiking, who will be with you, the route you are going to take, the time you will be leaving, and the approximate time you will be returning. Make sure that he/she has a description of the vehicle you will be traveling in.

It is also beneficial to find out what type of weather is expected for the next 24 hours (or longer if you will be gone more than 24 hours) in the area you are going to be hiking in. But remember, no matter what the forecast is, the weather can change with little or no advance notice. Always be prepared for the worst.

Dress for comfort

The clothing you choose to wear needs to be able to protect you from both heat and cold. Layering your clothing is the best way to prepare for a variety of weather conditions as well as exertion levels while enjoying the outdoors.

What is layering? Layering is wearing multiple layers of clothing when its cold; removing items as you warm up; adding layers as you cool off. Layering is best accomplished with four (4) basic layers; underwear, a clothing layer, an insulation layer, and an outer shell. These four basic layers can be combined, used separately, or in different combinations to achieve the warmth needed depending on the weather and your level of activity. There are many different fabrics as well as styles in all four layers. Find out what works best for you.

During warm weather, wear loose fitting, light colored clothing which will help reflect the heat. Cotton material works well in hot weather since it helps absorb and hold moisture, thus aiding in the evaporative cooling process.

Remember, no matter what the weather will be like, it is always better to wear long sleeves as well as long pants to protect your skin from sunburn and water loss. You will be amazed how much this protection will help you in high summertime desert temperatures.

HEADGEAR - A hat is very important in all types of weather and climates. A wide brimmed hat is good in the summer, since it will help to keep the sun off your face and neck, as well as insulating your head from the heat. During winter months, wear a hat that will keep your head warm. Your head is where the majority of body heat is lost and gained. Remember: "If your feet are cold, put a hat on."

FOOTWEAR - It is preferable to wear boots with lug soles and that have ankle support. Wearing a tennis type shoe or sneaker is not recommended, particularly in the Franklins because of the difficult terrain.

Plan Ahead To Make Your Hike More Enjoyable

In 90 degree weather a hiker can lose approximately one pint of water per 70 pounds of body weight every hour. Make sure to carry ample supplies of water to replenish what you lose. Don't wait to drink until you're thirsty. If you're thirsty, you are already starting to dehydrate. Pace yourself by taking regular breaks to drink. Also, take along snacks that can be easily carried in your backpack, and which are high in carbohydrates, while avoiding those high in fat. Eating is like drinking. You must stop and eat before you get hungry. If you don't you will pay the price later in discomfort and reduced stamina.

Items You Should Have With You At All Times

- Pack
- Water (at least one gallon per person per day)
- Food
- Shelter Material (tent, tarp)
- Sunscreen
- Insect repellent
- Bandana
- Watch
- Poncho or other rain gear
- Toilet paper
- Fire Starter
- Waterproof matches
- Sunglasses
- Flashlight and spare batteries
- Knife

- Signal Mirror
- Whistle
- First-aid kit
- Plastic trash bags

Other Items You Might Want To Take

- Walking stick
- Emergency Blanket
- 50 feet of accessory cord
- Compass
- Cellular phone

While on Your Hike

Remember to take the pace of the slowest person. Stop and take a break every once in a while. Look around you. Notice different landmarks. This way, just in case you have to re-trace your route, you'll know what to look for. Make sure to plan enough time to allow for your return trip before dark or the park closes. If the weather changes suddenly (fog, rain, wind, snow, thunder or lightning), turn back, taking care to avoid high points and ridges during lightning.

Just remember, the well prepared hiker is the one that comes away with the best memories. Plan ahead and enjoy the outdoors.

Emergency Instructions

If you become injured or are unable to get back to your destination, **STAY WHERE YOU ARE. STAY CALM.** If possible make a shelter to protect yourself from the environment, and use any type of signaling device you have to attract the attention of other hikers. If it is someone else in your party that is injured, make sure you protect him/her from the environment, but do not move him/her unless absolutely necessary. If there are enough people in your party, have someone stay with the injured person while others go for help. Otherwise, mark

the area where the injured person is located, take good mental notes of the area, and then go for help.

Phone Numbers

In case of emergency call 911

To receive further information about the Franklin Mountain State Park call (915) 566-6441

For information regarding search and rescue operations or medical emergencies contact the Fire Department Special Operations Division at (915) 543-6155